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THE Last Sermon

Of His GRACE

JOHN late Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY.

Preach'd before the

KING and QUEEN

AT

White-Hall, *February* 25th, 169¾.

Together with his Grace's

SERMON

ON

Phil. 3. 20. *For our Converſation is in Heaven.*

LONDON:

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THE LAST SERMON

Of His GRACE JOHN late Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury.*

TIT. III. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

GEneral Perſuaſives to Repentance and a good Life, and Invectives againſt Sin and Wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend Religion and Virtue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a Vicious courſe. But it muſt be acknowleged on the other hand, that theſe general Diſcourſes do not ſo immediately tend to reform the Lives of men: Becauſe they fall among the Croud, but do not touch the Conſciences of particular Perſons in ſo ſenſible and awakening a manner as when we treat of particular Duties and

Sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of particular Vertues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Phyſician, inſtead of applying particular Remedies to the Diſtemper of his Patient, ſhould entertain him with a long diſcourſe of Diſeaſes in general, and of the pleaſure and advantages of Health; and earneſtly perſuade him to be well; without taking his particular Diſeaſe into conſideration, and preſcribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we muſt take to task the great and common diſorders of their Lives, and repreſent their faults to them in ſuch a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning Vices of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-ſpeaking*; by which men contract ſo much guilt to themſelves, and create ſo much trouble to others: And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For *who is he*, ſaith the Son of *Sirach*, *that hath not offended with his tongue?* Ecclus. 19. 16. *In many things*, ſaith St. *James*, James 3. 2. *we offend all: And if any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

But how few have attain'd to this perfection? And yet unleſs we do endeavour after it, and in ſome good meaſure attain it, all our pretence to Religion is vain: So the ſame *Apoſtle* tells us, James 1. 26. *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.*

For

For the more diſtinct handling of this Argument, I ſhall reduce my Diſcourſe to theſe *Five* Heads.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it conſiſts.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To ſpeak evil of no man.*

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew the Evil of this practice, both in the *Cauſes* and *Effects* of it.

Fourthly, I ſhall add ſome further Conſiderations to diſſuade men from it.

Fifthly, I ſhall give ſome Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I ſhall conſider *what this Sin or Vice of evil ſpeaking, here forbidden by the Apoſtle, is:* μηδένα βλασφημεῖν, not to defame and ſlander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the *Etymology* of the word doth import. So that this Vice conſiſts in ſaying things of others which tend to their diſparagement and reproach, to the taking away or leſſening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things ſaid be true or not. If they be falſe, and we know it, then it is downright *Calumny*; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*; and ſo much the more injurious, becauſe really groundleſs and undeſerved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be ſo, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: And it is a fault to ſay the evil of others which is true, unleſs there be ſome good reaſon for it beſides: Becauſe it is contrary to that charity and goodneſs which *Chriſtianity* requires, to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without neceſſity or ſome other very good reaſon for it.

Again, It is *Evil-ſpeaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the *Text*, whether we be the firſt Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; becauſe the man that is evil ſpoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we ſpeak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed ſeems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *reviling*: The latter is more mean and baſe, and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Backbiting*.

And Laſtly, Whether it be done directly and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely and by way of oblique inſinuation; whether by way of downright reproach, or with ſome crafty preface of commendation: For ſo it have the effect to defame, the manner of addreſs does not much alter the caſe: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot leſs faulty: For many times the deepeſt Wounds are given by theſe ſmoother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking queſtions, *Have you not heard ſo and ſo of ſuch a man? I ſay no more, I only ask the queſtion*: Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to ſay what they have heard of ſuch a one, are very ſorry for it, and do not at all believe it*, if you will believe *them*: And this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to ſuſpect the worſt.

Theſe and ſuch like Arts, though they may ſeem to be tenderer and gentler ways of uſing mens reputation, yet in truth they are the moſt malicious and effectual methods of Slander; becauſe they inſinuate ſomething that is much worſe than is ſaid, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a ſtrong belief of ſomething that is very bad, though they know not what it is. So that it matters not in what faſhion a Slander

is

is dreſs'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminiſh his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the *Text*.

II. We will conſider *the extent of this Prohibition to ſpeak evil of no man*; and the due *bounds and limitations of it*. For it is not to be underſtood abſolutely, to forbid us to ſay any thing concerning others that is bad. This in ſome caſes may be neceſſary and our duty, and in ſeveral caſes very fit and reaſonable. The Queſtion is, In what Caſes by the general Rules of Scripture and right Reaſon we are warranted to ſay the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reaſon and neceſſity; as, for the prevention of ſome great evil, or the procuring of ſome conſiderable good to our ſelves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of *Sirach*, Eccl. 19. 8. *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canſt without offence reveal them not*; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canſt conceal them, divulge them not.

But becauſe this may not be direction ſufficient, I ſhall inſtance in ſome of the principal Caſes wherein men are warranted to ſpeak evil of others, and yet in ſo doing do not offend againſt this Prohibition in the *Text*.

Firſt, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the perſon of whom evil is ſpoken. In ſuch a caſe we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be ſo fit for us to uſe that boldneſs and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably

bably make no other uſe of this diſcovery but in order to his amendment. And this is ſo far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the beſt teſtimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindneſs to give him the opportunity of vindicating himſelf: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Caſe the Son of *Sirach* adviſeth to reveal men's faults; *Eccluſ.* 19. 13, 14, 15. *Admoniſh a friend*, ſays he, *it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: Admoniſh a friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it; and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again: Admoniſh a friend, for many times it is a ſlander; and believe not every tale.*

But then we muſt take care that this be done out of kindneſs, and that nothing of our own paſſion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in ſuch a manner as if we did it to ſhew our *authority* rather than our *charity*. It requires a great deal of addreſs and gentle application ſo to manage the buſineſs of Reproof, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon whom we reprove, inſtead of curing him.

Secondly, This likewiſe is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the publick good, or the prevention of ſome great evil ſhould require it. And then the plain reaſon of the thing will ſufficiently juſtifie a voluntary accuſation: otherwiſe it hath always among well-manner'd People been eſteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a for-

a forward Informer concerning the miſdemeanors of others. *Magiſtrates* may ſometimes think it fit to give encouragement to ſuch perſons, and to ſet one bad man to catch another, becauſe ſuch men are fitteſt for ſuch dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidents.

But when a man is call'd to give teſtimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in ſuch Caſes, he is ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, It is lawful to publiſh the faults of others in our own neceſſary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal another's faults without betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to ſuffer himſelf to be defamed to ſave the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and though a man had never ſo much goodneſs, he would firſt ſecure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other men's. We are *to love our neighbour as our ſelves*; ſo that the love of our ſelves is the Rule and Meaſure of our love to our neighbour: And therefore *firſt*, otherwiſe it could not be the *Rule*. And it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would riſe thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

Fourthly, This alſo is lawful for caution and warning to a third perſon, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or ſuſpicion of his bad qualities: But even in this caſe we ought to take great care that the

the ill character we give of any man be ſpread no further than is neceſſary to the good end we deſigned in it.

Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable Caſes, this Prohibition doth not I think hinder but that in ordinary converſation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be: Or that one friend may not in freedom ſpeak to another of the miſcarriage of a third perſon, where he is ſecure no ill uſe will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or ſpeaking ill of others: And the leſs we do it, though without any malice or deſign of harm, ſtill the better; becauſe this ſhews that we do not feed upon ill reports and take pleaſure in them.

Theſe are the uſual Caſes in whieh it may be neceſſary for us to ſpeak evil of other men. And theſe are ſo evidently reaſonable that the Prohibition in the *Text* cannot with reaſon be extended to them. And if no man would allow himſelf to ſay any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in theſe and the like Caſes, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III*d.* place to conſider *the evil of this practice*, both in the *Cauſes* and the *Conſequences* of it.

Firſt, We will conſider the *Cauſes* of it. And it commonly ſprings from one or more of theſe evil Roots.

Firſt, One of the deepeſt and moſt common *Cauſes* of *evil-ſpeaking* is *ill-nature* and cruelty of diſpoſition: And by a general miſtake *Ill-nature* paſſeth for *Wit*, as *Cunning* doth for *Wiſdom*; tho in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far diſtant as *Vice* and *Vertue*. And

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Mankind, than the general proneneſs of men to this Vice. For (as our *Saviour* ſays) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* And therefore men do commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide: which ſhews humane Nature to be ſtrangely diſtorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it ſelf in *Satyr* and Cenſure, than in Praiſe and *Panegyrick.* When men ſet themſelves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and ſtraining; and if any thing be fitly ſaid in that kind, it doth hardly reliſh with moſt men: But in the way of *Invective*, the Invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more eaſie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may come to his own turn to lie down and make ſport for others.

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all Companies: And the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt Meetings and Viſits, after the neceſſary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to ſit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sawce* of Converſation, and all Diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull which hath not ſomething of *piquancy* and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſome body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleas'd with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight: Though at the ſame time they have ſo much Juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much Wit, as to conclude that theſe very perſons will do the ſame

ſame for them in another Place and Company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another *Party*, and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Caſe, all Parties ſeem to be agreed that they do God great ſervice in blaſting the Reputation of their Adverſaries: And tho they all pretend to be *Chriſtiams*, and the *Diſciples* of *Him* who taught nothing but *kindneſs* and *meekneſs* and *charity*; yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſalvage and murderous diſpoſition they will flie at one another's Reputation and tear it in pieces: And what-ever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections do they raiſe againſt it? and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? *It is very well*, ſay they, *if it be true: I ſhall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a good man your ſelf, but have a care you be not deceived.*

Nay it is well, if to balance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that ſo the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, though all are to blame in this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the *Zealots* of all *Parties* have got a *ſcurvy Trick* of lying for the Truth.

But of all ſorts of People, I have obſerved the *Prieſts* and *Bigots* of the Church of *Rome* to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt Faith for a luſty Falſhood and Calumny. Others will bandy

bandy a falſe Report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a Lye and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. *John* in that expreſſion in the Revelation, *Whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye.*

Another ſhrewd ſign that *ill-nature* lies at the root of this *Vice* is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it our ſelves we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true.* But in the mean time we give it our *Paſs*, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

Secondly, Another Cauſe of the commonneſs of this Vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves, in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man. Our *Bleſſed Saviour*, ſpeaking of the evil of the *laſt days*, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of Charity among men; *Becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the Love of many ſhall wax cold*, *Matth.* 24. 12. When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they know by themſelves. They cannot have a good opinion of themſelves, and therefore are very unwilling to have ſo of any body elſe; and for this reaſon they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be ſome juſtification of them if they can but render others as bad as themſelves.

Thirdly, Another ſource of this Vice is *Malice* and

and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Paſſion they do not conſider what is true, but what is ſpiteful and miſchievous; and ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Paſſions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they ſpeak be true or not. Nay many are ſo *Deviliſh*, as to invent and raiſe falſe Reports on purpoſe to blaſt mens Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. *James* tells us that the ſlanderous *Tongue is ſet on fire of Hell*: And the *Devil* hath his very *Name* from *Calumny* and falſe Accuſation; and it is his *Nature* too, for he is always ready to ſtir up and foment this evil ſpirit among men: Nay, the *Scripture* tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuſe good men before God; as he did *Job*, charging him with *Hypocriſie* to God himſelf; *Who*, he knows, *does know the hearts of all the children of men.*

Fourthly, Another *Cauſe* of evil-ſpeaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obſcures *them*, and that their commendable qualities do ſtand in *their* light; and therefore they do what they can to caſt a cloud over them, that the bright ſhining of their Vertues may not ſcorch *them*. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh any thing that may ſerve to that purpoſe, thereby to raiſe themſelves upon the Ruins of other men's Reputation: And therefore as ſoon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they preſently go to ſend it abroad by the firſt *Poſt*: For the ſtring is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible ſwiftneſs, through *City* and *Country*; for fear the innocent man's juſtification ſhould over-take it.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Another *Cauſe* of evil-ſpeaking is *Impertinence* and *Curioſity*; an itch of talking and medling in the affairs of other Men, which do nowiſe concern them. Some perſons love to mingle themſelves in all buſineſs, and are loth to ſeem ignorant of ſo important a piece of *News* as the *faults* and *follies* of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of diſcourſe in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of ſomething better to talk of, and becauſe their Parts lie chiefly that way.

Laſtly, Men do this many times out of *wantonneſs* and for *diverſion*. So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderous Tongue *bites like a Serpent*, and *wounds like a Sword*. For what can be more barbarous, next to ſporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themſelves; and this only to divert themſelves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this ſort of men to diſtracted perſons; *As a mad man*, ſaith he, *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, ſo is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*; the LXX. render it, *So is the man that defameth his neighbour, and ſaith, Am I not in ſport?* Such, and ſo bad are the Cauſes of this Vice. I proceed to conſider, in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Conſequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves*.

Firſt, To *Others*; the Parties I mean that are ſlandered. To them it is certainly a great *injury*,

and commonly a high *Provocation*, but always matter of no ſmall *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*, and if the evil which we ſay of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all poſſible reparation. And though we ſhould do our utmoſt endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; becauſe the Vindication ſeldom reacheth ſo far as the Reproach, and becauſe commonly men are neither ſo forward to ſpread the Vindication, nor is it ſo eaſily received after ill impreſſions are once made. The ſolicitous Vindication of a man's ſelf is, at the beſt, but an *after-game*; and for the moſt part a man had better ſit ſtill, than to run the hazard of making the matter worſe by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more, That it is an Injury that deſcends to a man's Children and Poſterity; becauſe the good or ill Name of the Father is derived down to them; and many times the beſt thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemiſh'd Virtue and Worth: And do we make no Conſcience to rob his innocent Children of the beſt part of this ſmall Patrimony, and of all the kindneſs that would have been done them for their Father's ſake, if his Reputation had not been ſo undeſervedly ſtain'd? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blaſt a man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Poſterity? Can we make a jeſt of ſo ſerious a matter? Of an Injury ſo very hard to be repented of as it ought, becauſe in ſuch a Caſe no Repentance will be acceptable without Reſtitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it; and if we do it not, will be our Ruin in the other.

I will put the Caſe at the beſt, that the matter of the Slander is true; yet no man's Reputation is conſiderably ſtained, tho never ſo deſervedly, without great

great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by passing through several hands is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add something to it.

But, besides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the consequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and desperate Quarrels. This reason the wise Son of *Sirach* gives why we should defame no man: *Whether it be*, says he, *to a friend or to a foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and observed thee*, *Eccles.* 19.8,9. that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge, *and when the time cometh he will shew his hatred*; that is, he will take the first opportunity to revenge it.

At the best, it is always matter of *Grief* to the person that is defam'd: And *Christianity*, which is the *best-natur'd Institution* in the World, forbids us the doing of those things whereby we may *grieve one another*. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit even of a wise and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more sensible is he of this hard usage; because he never treats others so, nor is he conscious to himself that he hath deserved it.

Secondly, The *Consequences* of this Vice are as bad or worse to *our selves*. Whoever is wont to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those whom he desires to please; who, if they be wise enough, will conclude that he speaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themselves, no man could be so blind as not to see this.

And it is very well worthy of our consideration, which our *Saviour* says in this very Case, That *with what measure we meet to others, it shall be measured to us again*; Matth. 7. and that many times *heaped up*, and *running over*. For there is hardly any thing wherein

Mankind do use more strict justice and equality, than *in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing.*

Nay, Revenge often goes further than Words. A reproachful and slanderous Speech hath cost many a man a *Duel*, and in that the loss of his own Life, or the Murther of another, perhaps with the loss of his own Soul: And I have often wonder'd that among *Christians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

And tho neither of these great mischiefs should happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whose kindness and good-will he may come to stand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own safety and quiet, he ought to refrain from *evil-speaking*. *What man is he*, saith the *Psalmist*, *that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good: Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falshood*, Psal. 34. 12, 13.

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over us from God. If we allow our selves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. *James* expressly tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain*, Jam. 1. 26. And St. *Paul* puts *Slanderers* and *Revilers* amongst those that *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. And our *Blessed Saviour* hath told us, That *by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned*, 1 Cor. 6. 10. To which I will add the counsel given us by the *Wise-man*, *Refrain your tongue from backbiting, for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought, and the mouth that slandereth slayeth the Soul*, Wisdom of Solomon, *c.* 1. *v.* 11. I proceed in the

IVth place, to add *some further Arguments and Considerations to take men off from this Vice:* As,

First, That the use of *Speech* is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and bestowed upon

on him for ſome excellent end and purpoſe: That by this *Faculty* we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult together for our mutual comfort and benefit: Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The *Pſalmiſt*, as by *Interpreters* is generally thought, calls our *Tongue* our *Glory*; therewith we *praiſe God* and *bleſs Men*. Now to *bleſs* is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them well. So that we pervert the uſe of *Speech* and turn our *glory* into ſhame, when we abuſe this *Faculty* to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, Conſider how cheap a kindneſs it is to ſpeak well, at leaſt not to ſpeak ill of any. A good word is an eaſie obligation, but not to ſpeak ill requires only our Silence, which coſts us nothing. Some inſtances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and neceſſities of others: The expence deterrs many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never ſo covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at leaſt he might refrain from ſpeaking ill of him: eſpecially if it be conſider'd how dear many have paid for a ſlanderous and reproachful word.

Thirdly, Conſider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good-will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and confidence in him: And when he is dead, men will praiſe him; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteouſneſs to Men, nothing is thought a more ſignificant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular Character of a *Roman Gentleman*, *Neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere*, *he knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.*

Fourthly, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy Conſcience *Man*, and ſay whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt

not be glad to have every man's, eſpecially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd, and not to be hardly ſpoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable than that known *Rule, What thou wouldſt have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man.*

Fifthly, When you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not lie open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no Occaſion, no Example of this barbarous uſage of one another.

There are very few ſo innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wiſeſt, and moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect among men have ſome little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the railery of a mithical and malicious Wit: Therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon our ſelves, and look into that part of the *Wallet* which men commonly fling over their ſhoulders and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own Faults: And when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our *Saviour's Rule, He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

Laſtly conſider, That it is in many Caſes as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this purpoſe; *Talk not of other men's lives: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burſt thee*, Ecclus. 19. 10. I ſhall in the

V*th.* and *laſt* place, *give ſome Rules and Directions for*

for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

Firſt, Never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. When ever you poſitively accuſe and *endite* any man of any *Crime*, though it be in private and among Friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your *Oath*, becauſe God ſees and hears you. This not only Charity, but Juſtice and regard to truth do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill Report is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventer of it. For tho you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a *Lye*. Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon *common Fame*, which for the moſt part is falſe, but almoſt always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt Caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome Perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it would retrench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-ſpeaking* that is in the World.

Secondly, Before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs, and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be aſhamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reaſon alſo to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Conſider likewiſe, whether in the change of Humane affairs, you may not ſome time or other come to ſtand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a ſpiteful and needleſs word by a ſhrewd turn? So that if a man made no conſcience of hurting others, yet he ſhould in prudence have ſome conſideration of himſelf.

Thirdly, Let us accuſtom our ſelves to pity the Faults of men and to be truly ſorry for them, and then we ſhall take no pleaſure in publiſhing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, conſidering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our ſelves alſo are liable to be tempted: Conſidering likewiſe, how ſevere a Puniſhment every Fault and miſcarriage is to it ſelf; and how terribly it expoſeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Chriſtian*, that is not heartily ſorry for the faults even of his greateſt Enemies; and if he be ſo, he will diſcover them no further than is neceſſary to ſome good end.

Fourthly, When-ever we hear any man evil-ſpoken of, if we know any good of him let us ſay *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to ſtand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuſe and beſpatter them. Poſſibly the good you heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: However, it is better to preſerve the credit of a bad man, than to ſtain the Reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man ſhould be evil-ſpoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities ſhould be mention'd together; otherwiſe he may be ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and an indifferent Man may be made a Monſter.

They that will obſerve nothing in a Wiſe man, but his over-ſights and follies; nothing in a Good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a ſhift to render a very wiſe and good man very deſpicable. If one ſhould heap together all the paſſionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the beſt Man; all that he had ſaid or done amiſs in his whole Life, and preſent it all at one view, concealing his Wiſdom and Vertues; the Man in this Diſguiſe would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*: And

yet

yet if his Life were fairly repreſented, and juſt in the ſame manner it was led; and his many and great Virtues ſet over-againſt his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Perſon. But how many and great ſoever any man's ill Qualities are, it is but juſt that with all this heavy load of Faults he ſhould have the due praiſe of the few real Virtues that are in him.

Fifthly, That you may not ſpeak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *Buſy-bodies*, and thoſe that love to talk of other mens Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them becauſe of their Quality, then divert the diſcourſe ſome other way; or if you cannot do that, by ſeeming not to mind it, you may ſufficiently ſignify that you do not like it.

Sixthly, Let every man mind himſelf, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do but endeavour in good earneſt to mend thy ſelf, and it will be work enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionyſius*, who would fain have had a famous *Philoſopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and *Dionyſius* bad him not to ſpeak ill of him when he was return'd into *Greece*; *Plato* told him, *he had no leiſure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the World.

Laſtly, Let us ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak *finely*, but *fitly*. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to ſpeak: Uſe great Caution and Circumſpection in this matter: Look well about thee; on every ſide of the thing, and on every Perſon in the Company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing; or ſo ſtiff in converſation, as to drop nothing but *Aphoriſms* and *Oracles*: Eſpecially, among Equals and Friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a Man had the underſtanding of an *Angel*, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of *Wiſdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end we ſhould endeavour to get our minds furniſhed with matter of Diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others: And, if we have but a Mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a Field large enough for innocent Converſation; ſuch as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of Mankind: And why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the fool to gratify any body whatſoever?

I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument. But becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it: I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

Firſt, Some pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughteſt to abſtain from it: But in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian Religion forbids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuſe of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

Secondly, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this Doctrine were practiſed, Converſation

ſation would be ſpoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant diſcourſe and entertainment.

I anſwer, The deſign of this Diſcourſe is to redreſs a great evil in Converſation, and that I hope which mends it will not ſpoil it. And however, if men's Tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a good deal leſs than we do, both of our ſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and ſee many good days. *David*, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-ſpeaking; Pſal. 34. 12, 13. *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.*

But granting that there is ſome pleaſure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Innocence*: And the more any man conſiders this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are ſerious, we our ſelves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himſelf impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind and wiſh he had not done them. For this certainly is one neceſſary qualification for the *Bleſſed Sacrament*, that we *be in love and charity with our neighbours*; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconſiſtent.

Thirdly, There is yet a more ſpecious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can eſcape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place: Becauſe by this means one great reſtraint from doing evil would be taken away, which theſe good men who are ſo bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the diſpleaſure of God, will yet abſtain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from Men: Beſides,

that

that this ſeems the moſt proper puniſhment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not ſeem ſo good and laudable a way to puniſh one Fault by another. But let no man encourage himſelf in an evil way with this hope, that he ſhall eſcape the cenſure of men: When I have ſaid all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-ſpeaking enough in the World to chaſtiſe them that do ill: And tho we ſhould hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wiſh we could but be perſuaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be ſufficiently laſh'd for their Faults, tho we ſate by and ſaid nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good Men ſhould be concern'd in this odious Work. There will always be Offenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the *Executioners* to inflict this puniſhment upon one another. Therefore let no man preſume upon Impunity on the one hand; and on the other, let no man deſpair but that this buſineſs will be ſufficiently done one way or other. I am very much miſtaken, if we may not ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd World that there will be no failure of Juſtice in this kind.

And here, if I durſt, I would fain have ſaid a word or two concerning that more publick ſort of *Obloquy* by *Lampoons* and *Libels*, ſo much in faſhion in this witty Age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible ſort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be ſaid without offence, that how much ſoever men are pleas'd to ſee others abuſed in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn: However I cannot but hope that every man that impartially conſiders muſt own it to be a fault of a very high nature to revile thoſe whom God hath placed in Authority over us, and *to ſlander the footſteps of the Lord's Anointed*: Eſpecially ſince it is ſo expreſly written, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy People.*

Having

Having repreſented the great evil of this Vice, it might not now be improper to ſay ſomething to thoſe who ſuffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil ſaid of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occaſions for the future; and ſo turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making ſo good an uſe of it: And then it will be well for us to have been evil ſpoken of.

Are we innocent? We may ſo much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the Pattern of our *Bleſſed Saviour, Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

We may conſider likewiſe, that tho it be a misfortune to be evil-ſpoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore ſhould not put us into Paſſion, becauſe another man's being injurious to me is no good reaſon why I ſhould be uneaſy to my ſelf. We ſhould not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much leſs upon our ſelves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to loſe thy Patience. Be not ſuch a fool, as to part with any one Virtue becauſe ſome men are ſo malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the reſt. When men ſpeak ill of thee, do as *Plato* ſaid he would do in that caſe; *Live ſo, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been ſaid, and to urge you and my ſelf to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practiſe what we ſo plainly ſee to be our Duty. Many are ſo taken up with the deep *Points* and *Myſteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of human Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the *Chriſtian Religion* hath made them inſeparable. True *Faith* is neceſſary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the *one* never ought to be preſs'd to the prejudice of the *other.*

I fore-

I foresee what will be said, because I have heard it so often said in the like case; that there is *not one word of Jesus Christ in all this.* No more is there in the *Text.* And yet I hope that *Jesus Christ* is truly preach'd, whenever his *Will* and *Laws,* and the *Duties* enjoin'd by the *Christian Religion* are inculcated upon us.

But some men are pleased to say, that *this is mere Morality:* I answer, that this is *Scripture-Morality* and *Christian-Morality,* and who hath any thing to say against *that?* Nay, I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Christian Religion,* who lives in the neglect of so plain a *Duty;* and in the practice of a *Sin* so clearly condemn'd by it, as this of *evil-speaking* is.

But because *the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged Sword,* yea sharper than *Calumny* it self; and pierceth the very Hearts and Consciences of men, laying us open to our selves, and convincing us of our more secret as well as our more visible Faults; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God.*

And I have purposely reserved this to the last, because it is more persuasive and penetrating than any Humane Discourse. And to this end be pleas'd to consider in what company the *Holy Ghost* doth usually mention this *Sin.* There is scarce any *black Catalogue* of *Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among them; in the company of the very worst *Actions* and most irregular *Passions* of men. *Out of the heart,* says our *Saviour,* Matt. 15. 19. *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false witness, evil speakings.* And the *Apostle,* Rom. 1. 29. ranks *backbiters* with *fornicators,* and *murderers,* and *haters of God*; and with those of whom it is expresly said, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. that *they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

And when he enumerates the Sins of *the last times,* 2 Tim. 3. 2, 3. *Men,* says he, *shall be lovers of themselves,*

ſelves, covetous, boaſters, evil-ſpeakers, without natural affection, perfidious, falſe accuſers, &c. And which is the ſtrangeſt of all, they who are ſaid to be guilty of theſe great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apoſtle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for ſo it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*, and yet at the ſame time to live in a moſt palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion*: As if any pretence to *Myſtery* and I know not what extraordinary *attainments* in the knowledge of *Chriſt*, could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and ſet them above the Vertues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* ſo frequently rank'd with *Murther* and *Adultery* and the *blackeſt Crimes*; ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly ſhut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God?* and can we allow our ſelves in the common practice of a *Sin*, than which there is hardly any Fault of mens Lives more frequently mention'd, more ſeverely reprov'd, and more odiouſly branded in that *Holy Book*.

Conſider ſeriouſly theſe *Texts*, Pſal. 15. 1. *Who ſhall abide in thy Tabernacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our *Saviour* ſays, that *of every idle word we muſt give an account in the day of Judgment*; that *by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemn'd?* What can be more ſevere than that of St. *James*? *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The *Sin* which I have now warned men againſt, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God*;

God; and the *Duty* which I have now been perſuading you to, is eaſy for every man to underſtand, not hard for any man, that can but reſolve to keep a good guard upon himſelf for ſome time, by the grace of God to practice; and moſt reaſonable for all *Men*, but eſpecially for all *Chriſtians*, to obſerve. It is as eaſy as a *reſolute ſilence* upon juſt occaſion, as reaſonable as *prudence* and *juſtice* and *charity*, and the preſervation of *peace* and *good-will* among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſible an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Conſiderations let us every one of us be perſuaded to take up *David*'s deliberate Reſolution, *Pſal.* 31. 1. *I ſaid, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we ſhould ſoon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this *Vice*, together with thoſe that are nearly allied to it, and may at the ſame time, and almoſt with the ſame reſolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many conſiderable Vertues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conſcience of his *Words* ſhould not take an equal or a greater care of his *Actions*. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reaſon of that ſaying of St. *James*, and with which I ſhall conclude: *If any man offend not in Word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will; working in you always that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; To whom be glory for ever, *Amen.*

OF A HEAVENLY CONVERSATION.

PHIL. iii. 20.

For our Converſation is in Heaven.

FOR the underſtanding of which words we need to look back no further than the 18*th verſe* of this *Chapter*, where the Apoſtle with great vehemency and paſſion ſpeaks of ſome among the *Philippians*, who indeed profeſs'd Chriſtianity but yet would do any thing to decline ſuffering for that profeſſion; *there are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*; they cannot endure to ſuffer with him and for him, they are ſo ſenſual and wedded to this world that they will do any thing to avoid perſecution; ſo he deſcribes them in the next *verſe*, *whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things.* Now in oppoſition to theſe ſenſual and earthly-minded men the Apoſtle gives us the character of the true Chriſtians, they are ſuch as mind Heaven and another world, and pre-

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fer the hopes of that to all the intereſts of this life, *our converſation is in Heaven.*

For the right underſtanding of which *phraſe* be pleaſed to obſerve, that it is an alluſion to a City or Corporation, and to the privileges and manners of thoſe who are free of it. And Heaven is ſeveral times in Scripture repreſented to us under this notion of a *City*, It is ſaid of *Abraham* that *he looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*, *Heb.* 11. 10. It is called likewiſe *the City of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem*, *Heb.* 12. 22. And the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaking of the uncertain condition of Chriſtians in this world ſays of them, that *here they have no continuing City, but look for one that is to come*, *Heb.* 14. 14.

Now to this *City* the Apoſtle alludes here in the Text, when he ſays *our converſation is in Heaven.* For the word πολίτευμα, which is rendred *converſation*, may either ſignifie the *privilege* of Citizens, or their *converſation* and manners, or may take in both theſe.

In the *firſt* ſenſe of the *priviledge* of Citizens, we find πολιτεία a word of near affinity with this ſometimes us'd; *with a great ſum* (ſays the Captain to *Paul*) *obtained I* τῷ πολιτείαν ταύτην, *this freedom*, *Acts* 22. 28. According to this ſenſe, ἡμῶν τὸ πολίτευμα may very well be rendred, as *Tertullian* often does this Text, *municipatus noſter*, *our Citizenſhip is in Heaven*; an alluſion perhaps (as the learned Dr. *Hammond* obſerves) to thoſe who though they were not born at *Rome*, and it may be lived at a great diſtance from it, had yet *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the privilege of *Roman* Citizens. In like manner the Apoſtle here deſcribes the condition of Chriſtians. 'Tis true we are born here in this world and live in it,

it, but we belong to another Corporation; we are denizens of another Country and free of that City which is above.

In the other ſenſe of the *converſation* of Citizens we find the verb πολιτεύεσθε uſed towards the beginning of this *Epiſtle*, *Let your converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt.* And why may not the word πολίτευμα in the Text, *Phil.* 1. 27. without any inconvenience include both theſe? as if the Apoſtle had ſaid, there are ſome that mind earthly things, and are ſo addicted to them that rather than part with them they will forſake their Religion; but as for us, we conſider that we are Citizens of Heaven, and accordingly we converſe and demean our ſelves in this world as thoſe that are free of another City and do belong to it.

So that to have *our converſation in heaven* does imply theſe two things.

Firſt, The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven.

Secondly, The effect which thoſe thoughts ought to have upon our lives.

Theſe two things take up the meaning of my Text, and ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

I. The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven, that is, of the happy and glorious ſtate of good men in another life. And concerning this, there are two things principally which offer themſelves to our conſideration *Firſt*, The happineſs of this ſtate. *Secondly*, The way and means whereby we may come to partake of this happineſs.

Firſt, We will conſider the happineſs of this ſtate. But what, and how great this happineſs is, I am not able to repreſent to you. Theſe things are yet in a great meaſure within the veil, and it does not now fully *appear what we ſhall be*. The Scriptures have reveal'd ſo much in general concerning the reality and unſpeakable felicities of this ſtate as may ſatisfie us for the preſent, and ſerve to inflame our deſires after it, and to quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it; as *namely*, that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world; that it is very great; and that it is eternal; in a word, that it is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine.

1. It is incomparably beyond any happineſs in this world. It is free from all thoſe ſharp and bitter ingredients which do abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mix'd, and uncertain, and unſatisfying; nay ſo far are they from giving us ſatisfaction, that the very ſweeteſt of them are ſatiating and cloying.

None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt. There is ſomething of *vanity* mingled with all our earthly enjoyments and *that* cauſeth *vexation of ſpirit*. There is no ſenſual pleaſure but is either purchas d by ſome pain, or attended with it, or ends in it. A great eſtate is neither to be got without care, nor kept without fear, nor loſt without trouble. Dignity and greatneſs is troubleſome almoſt to all mankind, it is commonly uneaſie to them that have it and it is uſually hated and envy'd by thoſe that have it not. Knowledge, that is one of the beſt and ſweeteſt pleaſures of humane life; and yet if we may believe the experience of one, who had as great a ſhare of it as any of the Sons of men ever had, he will tell us, that *this alſo is vexation of ſpirit*; *for*

in much wiſdom there is much grief, and he that encreaſeth knowledge, encreaſeth ſorrow, Eccl. 1. 17, 18.

Thus it is with all the things of this world; the beſt of them have a mixture of good and evil, of joy and ſorrow in them: but the happineſs of the next life is free from allay and mixture. In the deſcription of the *new Jeruſalem* it is ſaid, that *there ſhall be no more curſe, and there ſhall be no night there, Rev.* 22, 3, 5. nothing to imbitter our bleſſings, or obſcure our glory. Heaven is the proper region of happineſs, there onely are pure joys and an unmingled felicity.

But the enjoyments of this world as they are mix'd, ſo they are uncertain. So wavering and inconſtant are they that we can have no ſecurity of them, when we think our ſelves to have the faſteſt hold of them they ſlip out of our hands we know not how. For this reaſon *Solomon* very elegantly calls them things *that are not, Why wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make to themſelves wings and flie like an Eagle towards heaven.* So fugitive are they, that after all our endeavours to ſecure them they may break looſe from us and in an inſtant vaniſh out of our ſight, *riches make to themſelves wings, and flie like an Eagle*, intimating to us that riches are often acceſſary to their own ruin. Many times the greatneſs of a mans eſtate, and nothing elſe, hath been the cauſe of the loſs of it, and of taking away the life of the owner thereof. The *fairneſs* of ſome mens fortune hath been a temptation to thoſe who have been more powerful to *raviſh* it from them, thus *riches make to themſelves wings.* So that he that enjoys the greateſt happineſs of this world does ſtill want one happineſs more, to ſecure to him for the future what he poſſeſſes for the preſent. But the

happineſs of Heaven is a ſteady and conſtant light, fixt and unchangeable as the fountain from whence it ſprings, *the father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning.*

And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unſatisfying. This is the *vanity of vanities*, that every thing in this world can trouble us but nothing can give us ſatisfaction. I know not how it is, but either we, or the things of this world, or both, are ſo phantaſtical, that we can neither be well with theſe things, nor well without them. If we be hungry, we are in pain; and if we eat to the full, we are uneaſie. If we be poor we think our ſelves miſerable, and when we come to be rich we commonly really are ſo. If we are in a low condition we fret and murmur, and if we chance to get up and to be rais'd to greatneſs we are many times farther from contentment than we were before So that we purſue the happineſs of this world juſt as little children chaſe birds, when we think we are come very near it and have it almoſt in our hands it flies farther from us than it was at firſt.

Nay, ſo far are the enjoyments of this world from affording us ſatisfaction, that the ſweeteſt of them are moſt apt to ſatiate and cloy us. All the pleaſures of this world are ſo contriv'd as to yield us very little happineſs. If they go off quickly they ſignifie nothing, and if they ſtay long we are ſick of them: After a full draught of any ſenſual pleaſure we preſently loath it, and hate it as much after the enjoyment as we courted it and long'd for it in the expectation. But the delights of the other world, as they will give us full ſatisfaction ſo we ſhall never be weary of them. Every repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleaſure and contentment. In the felici-

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ties of Heaven theſe two things ſhall be reconcil'd, which never met together in any ſenſual delight, long and full enjoyment and yet a freſh and perpetual pleaſure. As in Gods *preſence there is fulneſs of joy*, ſo *at his right hand there ſhall be pleaſures for evermore.*

2. The happineſs of the other life is not onely incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world (that, it may be, is no great commendation of it) but it is very great in it ſelf. The happineſs of Heaven is uſually in Scripture deſcrib'd to us by ſuch pleaſures as are manly and excellent, chaſt and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refin'd than thoſe of ſenſe; and if the Scripture at any time deſcend to the metaphors of a *feaſt*, and a *banquet*, and a *marriage*, it is plainly by way of accommodation to our weakneſs and condeſcention to our capacities.

But the chief ingredients of this happineſs, ſo far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us, are the perfection of our knowledge, and the height of our love, and the perpetual ſociety and friendſhip of all the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions; and the joyful concurrence of all theſe in chearful expreſſions of gratitude, in the inceſſant praiſes and admiration of the fountain and author of all this happineſs. And what can be more delightful than to have our underſtandings entertain'd with a clear ſight of the beſt and moſt perfect Being, with the knowledge of all his works and of the wiſe deſigns of his providence here in the world? than to live in the reviving preſence of God, and to be continually attending upon him whoſe favour is life, and whoſe glory is much more above that of any of the Princes of this world than the greateſt of them is above the pooreſt worm? The Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomons* Servants happy in having the opportunity by ſtanding

continually before him to hear his wiſdom; but in the other world it ſhall be a happineſs to *Solomon* himſelf, and to the wiſeſt and greateſt perſons that ever were in this world, to ſtand before this great King to admire his wiſdom and to behold his glory. Not that I imagine the happineſs of Heaven to conſiſt in a perpetual gazing upon God, and in an idle contemplation of the glories of that place. For as by that bleſſed ſight we ſhall be infinitely tranſported, ſo the Scripture tells us we ſhall be alſo transform'd into the image of the divine perfections; we *ſhall ſee God and we ſhall be like him*, and what greater happineſs can there be than to be like the happieſt and moſt perfect Being in the world? Beſides, who can tell what employment God may have for us in the next life? We need not doubt but that he who is happineſs it ſelf, and hath promis'd to make us happy, can eaſily find out ſuch employments and delights for us in the other world as will be proper and ſuitable to that ſtate.

But then beſides the improvement of our knowledge there ſhall be the moſt delightful exerciſe of love. When we come to heaven we ſhall enter into the ſociety of the bleſſed Angels and of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, that is, freed from all thoſe paſſions and infirmities which do now render the converſation, even of the beſt men, ſometimes troubleſome to one another. We ſhall then meet with all thoſe excellent Perſons, thoſe brave Minds, thoſe innocent and charitable Souls whom we have ſeen, and heard, and read of in this world. There we ſhall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends, and perhaps with many of our enemies, to whom we ſhall then be perfectly reconcil'd notwithſtanding all the warm conteſts and peeviſh differences which we had with them in this world, even about matters

matters of Religion. For Heaven is a ſtate of perfect love and friendſhip, there will be nothing but kindneſs and good nature there, and all the prudent Arts of endearment and wiſe ways of rendring converſation mutually pleaſant to one another. And what greater happineſs can be imagin'd than to converſe freely with ſo many excellent perſons, without any thing of folly or diſguiſe, of jealouſie or deſign upon one another? For then there will be none of thoſe vices and paſſions, of covetouſneſs and ambition, of envy and hatred, of wrath and peeviſhneſs, which do now ſo much ſpoil the pleaſure and diſturb the quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, ſchiſms and diviſions will then be effectually hinder'd not by force but by love, not by compulſion but by that *charity which never fails*; and all thoſe controverſies in Religion which are now ſo hotly agitated will then be finally determin'd, not as we endeavour to end them now by Canons and Decrees, but by a perfect knowledge and convincing light.

And when this bleſſed ſociety is met together and thus united by love, they ſhall all joyn in gratitude to their great Patrons and Benefactors, *to him that ſits upon the Throne and to the lamb that was ſlain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath lov'd us and waſh'd us from our ſins in his own blood.* And they ſhall ſing everlaſting ſongs of praiſe to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that infinite goodneſs, and admirable wiſdom, and almighty power, which are clearly ſeen in the creation and government of the world and of all the Creatures in it; particularly for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, for the comfort of their lives, and for all his mercifull providences towards them in this world: But above all for the redemption of their

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ſouls by the death of his Son for the free forgiveneſs of their ſins, for the gracious aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, and for conducting them ſafely through all the ſnares and dangers, the troubles and temptations of this world to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs which then they ſhall be partakers of, and are bound to praiſe God for to all eternity. This, this ſhall be the employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, and theſe are the chief ingredients of our happineſs which the Spripture mentions. And if there were no other as there may be ten thouſand more for any thing I can tell, yet generous and vertuous minds will eaſily underſtand how great a pleaſure there is in the improvement of our knowledge, and the exerciſe of love, and in a gratefull and perpetual acknowledgement of the greateſt benefits that creatures are capable of receiving.

3. This happineſs ſhall be eternal. And though this be but a circumſtance and do not enter into the nature of our happineſs, yet it is ſo material a one that all the felicities which heaven affords would be imperfect without it. It would ſtrangely damp and allay all our joys to think that they ſhould ſometime have an end. And the greater our happineſs were, the greater trouble it would be to us to conſider that it muſt have a period. It would make a man ſorrowfull indeed to think of leaving ſuch vaſt poſſeſſions. Indeed if the happineſs of heaven were ſuch as the joys of this world are, it were fit they ſhould be as ſhort; for after a little enjoyment it would cloy us, and we ſhould ſoon grow weary of it: But being ſo excellent, it would ſcarce be a happineſs if it were not eternal. It would imbitter the pleaſures of heaven, as great as they are, to ſee to an end of them, though it were at never ſo great a diſtance; to conſider that all this vaſt

treaſure

treaſure of happineſs would one day be exhauſted, and that after ſo many years were paſt we ſhould be as poor and miſerable again as we were once in this world. God hath ſo order'd things, that the vain and empty delights of this world ſhould be temporary and tranſient, but that the great and ſubſtantial pleaſures of the other world ſhould be as laſting as they are excellent. For Heaven as it is an *exceeding*, ſo it is *an eternal weight of glory*. And this is that which crowns the joys of heaven and baniſhes all fear and trouble from the minds of the bleſſed. And thus to be ſecur'd in the poſſeſſion of our happineſs is an unſpeakable addition to it. For that which is eternal as it ſhall never determine, ſo it can never be diminiſh'd; for to be diminiſh'd and to decay is to draw nearer to an end, but that which ſhall never have an end can never come nearer to it.

O vaſt *eternity!* how doſt thou ſwallow up our thoughts and entertain us at once with delight and amazement? This is the very top and higheſt pitch of our happineſs, upon which we may ſtand ſecure and look down with ſcorn upon all things here below; and how ſmall and inconſiderable do they appear to us, compar'd with the vaſt and endleſs enjoyments of our future ſtate? But oh vain and fooliſh ſouls! that are ſo little concern'd for eternity; that for the trifles of time, and *the pleaſures of ſin which are but for a ſeaſon*, can find in our hearts to forfeit an everlaſting felicity. Bleſſed God! why haſt thou prepar'd ſuch a happineſs for thoſe who neither conſider it, nor ſeek after it? *Why is* ſuch *a price put into the hands of fools, who have no heart to make uſe of it*; who fondly chuſe to gratifie their luſts rather than to ſave their ſouls, and fortiſhly prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin before a bleſſed immortality?

4. And

4. And laſtly, This happineſs is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. It is ſo great that is cannot now *enter into the heart of man.* We cannot from the experience of any of thoſe pleaſures and delights which we have been acquainted withall in this world frame an equal *Idea* and conception of it. So that when we come to Heaven we ſhall be ready to ſay of it as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon*'s wiſedom and proſperity, that *half of it hath not been told us*; that the felicities and glories of that ſtate do far exceed all the fame which we heard of them in this world. For who can ſay how great a good God is? and how happy he who is the fountain of happineſs can make thoſe ſouls that love him, and thoſe whom he loves?

In this imperfect ſtate we are not capable of a full repreſentation of thoſe glories. *We cannot* now *ſee God and live.* A full deſcription of Heaven and of the pleaſures of that ſtate would let in joys upon us too big for our narrow capacities, and too ſtrong for weak mortality to bear. *We are now but Children, and we ſpeak as Children, and underſtand* and think *as Children* concerning theſe things; but in the other ſtate we ſhall grow up *to be men*, and then we ſhall *put away* theſe *childiſh* thoughts; *now we know but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect ſhall be done away*; *now we ſee through a glaſs darkly* (ἐν αἰνίγματι, *in a riddle*) *but then we ſhall ſee face to face*; *now we know in part, but then we ſhall know even as alſo we are known*, as the Apoſtle diſcourſeth excellently concerning this very matter, 1 *Cor.* 13. 9, 10, 11.

No ſooner ſhall we enter upon the joys of the other world, but our minds ſhall be rais'd to a ſtrength and activity as much above that of the moſt knowing perſons

ſons in the world as the thoughts of the greateſt Philoſopher and wiſeſt man upon earth are above the thoughts of a child or a fool. No man's mind is now ſo well fram'd to underſtand any thing in this world, as our underſtandings ſhall then be fitted for the knowledge of God and of the things that belong to that ſtate. In the mean time let us bleſs God that he hath reveal'd ſo much of this happineſs to us as is neceſſary to excite and encourage us to ſeek after it.

The *Second* thing to be conſider'd concerning our future happineſs, is the way and means whereby we may come to be made partakers of it. And that in ſhort is by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, in and through the mercies of God in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt indeed is the author of our ſalvation, but obedience is the condition of it; ſo the Apoſtle tells us, that Chriſt *is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him*, Heb 5. 1. It is *the grace of God* in the Goſpel *which brings* or offers this *ſalvation to us*, but then it is by the *denying of ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and by *living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world* that we are *to wait for the bleſſed hope*, Tit. 2. 11, 12. Our Saviour promiſes this happineſs to the pure in heart, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*; and elſewhere the Scripture doth exclude all others from any ſhare or portion in this bleſſedneſs. ſo the Apoſtle aſſures us *that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14.

And holineſs is not onely a condition but a neceſſary qualification for the happineſs of the next life. This is the force of St. *John*'s reaſoning, *we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him.* To *ſee God* is to be happy, but unleſs we be like him we cannot ſee him. The ſight

and

and preſence of God himſelf would be no happineſs to that man who is not like to God in the temper and diſpoſition of his mind. And from hence the Apoſtle infers in the next *verſe*, *every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* So that if we live wicked lives, if we allow our ſelves in the practice of any known ſin, we interrupt our hopes of Heaven and render our ſelves unfit for eternal life. By this means we defeat all the deſigns of God's grace and mercy towards us, and ſalvation it ſelf cannot ſave us if we make our ſelves incapable of that happineſs which God offers. Heaven is in Scripture call'd *an inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, and *the inheritance of the Saints in light*; ſo that it is not enough that this *inheritance* is promis'd to us, but we muſt be qualifi'd and prepar'd for it, and *be made meet to be made partakers of it.*

And this life is the time of our preparation for our future ſtate. Ours ſouls will continue for ever what we make them in this world. Such a temper and diſpoſition of mind as a man carries with him out of this life he ſhall retain in the next. 'Tis true indeed, heaven perfects thoſe holy and vertuous diſpoſitions which are begun here; but the other world alters no man as to his main ſtate, *he that is filthy will be filthy ſtill*, and *he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous* ſtill. If we do not in a good degree mortifie our luſts and paſſions here death will not kill them for us, but we ſhall carry them with us into the other world. And if God ſhould admit us ſo qualifi'd into the place of happineſs, yet we ſhall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Our ſenſual inclinations and deſires would meet with nothing there that would be ſuitable to them, and we ſhould be perpetually tormented with thoſe appetites which we brought

brought with us out of this world, becauſe we ſhould find nothing there to gratifie them withall. For as the Apoſtle ſays in another ſenſe, *The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* The happineſs of heaven conſiſts in ſuch things as a wicked man hath no guſt and reliſh for. So that if a covetous, or ambitious, or voluptuous man were in Heaven, he would be juſt like the rich man in Hell, tormented with a continual thirſt, and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent deſires, and would not be able, amidſt all the plenty and treaſures of that place, to find ſo much as one drop of ſuitable pleaſure and delight to quench and allay that heat. So likewiſe our fierce and unruly paſſions; if we ſhould carry them with us into the other world, how inconſiſtent would they be with happineſs? They would not onely make us miſerable our ſelves, but be a trouble to all thoſe with whom we ſhould converſe. If a man of an envious and malicious, of a peeviſh and paſſionate temper, were admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed, he would not onely be unhappy himſelf, but would diſturb the quiet of others, and raiſe ſtorms even in thoſe calm regions. Vain man! that dreameſt of being happy without any diſpoſition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we deſire and to live with thoſe whom we love. But there is nothing in heaven ſuitable to the deſires and appetites of a wicked man. All the joys of that place, and the delights of that ſtate are purely ſpiritual, and are onely to be reliſh'd by thoſe who have *purified themſelves as God is pure.* But if thou be carnal and ſenſual, what are theſe things to thee? What happineſs would it be to thee to ſee God, and to have him always in thy view who was never in all thy thoughts; to be tied to live for ever in his company

company who is of a quite contrary temper and diſpoſition to thy ſelf, whoſe preſence thou dreadeſt, and whom whilſt thou waſt in this world thou couldſt never endure to think upon? So that the pleaſures of Heaven it ſelf could ſignifie no good or happineſs to that man who is not ſo diſpos'd as to take pleaſure in them. Heaven is too pure an air for corrupt ſouls to live and breath in, and the whole employment and converſation of that place, as it would be unſuitable, ſo would it alſo be unacceptable to a ſenſual and vicious perſon.

From all this it appears how neceſſary it is for us to prepare our ſelves for this bleſſed ſtate, by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, and by mortifying every luſt and inordinate paſſion in our ſouls. For till this be done we are not meet to be made partakers of the felicities of the other world. And thus I have done with the *firſt* thing imply'd in this phraſe *of having our converſation in heaven, viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of heaven; or the happineſs of that ſtate, and of the way and means whereby that happineſs is to be attained.

II. The *having our converſation in heaven* does imply likewiſe the effect which thoſe conſiderations ought to have upon our hearts and lives: As,

1. To convince us of the vanity of this world. God hath on purpoſe made this world troubleſome and uneaſie to us, that there might be no ſufficient temptation to reaſonable and conſiderate men to take them off from the care and thought of their future happineſs; that God and heaven might have no rival here below; that there might be nothing in this world that might pretend to our affection or court us with any advantage in compariſon of everlaſting life and glory.

When

When we come to die and eternity ſhall preſent it ſelf to our ſerious and waking thoughts, then things will put on another face, and thoſe things which we valued ſo much in this life will then appear to be nothing worth; but thoſe things which we neglected, to be of infinite concernment to us, and worthy to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we would conſider theſe things in time, while the opportunities of life and health are before us, we might be convinc'd at a cheaper rate, and come to be ſatisfi'd of the vanity of this world before we deſpair d of the happineſs of the other.

2. To make us very active and induſtrious to be as good, and to do as much good as we can in this life, that ſo we may be qualifi'd and diſpos d for the happineſs of the next. Men are uſually very induſtrious for the things of this life, to be rich and great in the world; did we but value heaven half as much as it deſerves we ſhould take infinitely more pains for that. So often as we conſider the glories that are above, how does it accuſe our ſloth and condemn our folly that we are leſs concerned for our ſouls than moſt men are for their bodies, that we will not labour half ſo much for an eternal inheritance as men ordinarily do for theſe corruptible things?

Let us remember that we are haſting apace to another world, and that our eternal happineſs now lies at the ſtake. And how ſhould it quicken our endeavours to have ſuch a reward ſet before us, to have Crowns and Scepters in our eyes? would we but often repreſent to our minds the glorious things of another world, what fervours ſhould we feel in our hearts? we ſhould be all life, and ſpirit, and wing; and ſhould do Gods will, almoſt with the ſame readineſs and delight, as the *Angels* do *who continually*

behold the face of their Father. The conſideration of heaven and the firm perſwaſion of our future happineſs ſhould actuate all the powers of our ſouls, and be continually inſpiring us with new vigour in the ways of holineſs and vertue. How ſhould this thought ſwell our reſolutions and confirm our purpoſes of obedience, that if we have our *fruit unto holineſs* our *end will be everlaſting life.*

3. To mitigate and lighten the evils and afflictions of this life. It is no great matter how rough the way be provided we be ſure that it leads to happineſs. The incomparably greater good of the next life will to a wiſe and conſiderate man weigh down all the evils of this. And the Scripture tells us that there is no compariſon between them. *The ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us*, *Rom.* 8. 18. The evils of this life afflict men more or leſs according as the ſoul is fortified with conſiderations proper to ſupport us under them. When we conſider that we have but a little while to be here, that we are upon our journey travelling towards our heavenly Countrey where we ſhall meet with all the delights we can deſire, it ought not to trouble us much to endure ſtorms and foul ways, and to want many of thoſe accommodations we might expect at home. This is the common fate of Travellers, and we muſt take things as we find them and not look to have every thing juſt to our mind. Theſe difficulties and inconveniences will ſhortly be over, and after a few days will be quite forgotten, and be to us as if they had never been. And when we are ſafely landed in our own Country, with what pleaſure ſhall we look back upon thoſe rough and boiſterous Seas which we have eſcap'd? The more troubles we have paſt through the kinder uſage we ſhall find when we come

to

to our Fathers houſe. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* When we come to heaven our happineſs ſhall then be as real as our miſeries were here upon earth, and far greater and more laſting. And what great matter is it though we ſuffer a while in this world, provided we eſcape the endleſs unſufferable torments of the next; though we have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reſerv'd for us and we ſhall receive them with intereſt in the other?

Several of the evils and calamities of this life would be unſufferable indeed, if there were nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this were true, Chriſtians would not onely be of all *men* but of all *creatures the moſt miſerable.* But our Religion hath abundantly aſſur'd us to the contrary. And the aſſurance of this was that which made the primitive Chriſtians to embrace ſufferings with ſo much cheerfulneſs, *to glory in tribulation,* and *to take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring ſubſtance.* The ſeven brethren in the Hiſtory of the *Maccabees* upon this perſwaſion would *not accept deliverance that they might obtain a better reſurrection.* That ſtorm of ſtones which was pour'd upon St. *Stephen* was no more to him than a common ſhower when *he ſaw the heavens open'd,* and *Jeſus* (in whoſe cauſe he ſuffered) *ſtanding on the right hand of God.*

4. To make us ſincere in all our profeſſions, words and actions, did men firmly believe the rewards of another world their Religion would not be onely in ſhew and pretence, but in life and reality, no man would put on a *form of godlineſs* that were deſtitute of *the power of it*; we ſhould do nothing for the opinion of others, but all with regard to God and

our own Conſciences ; and be as curious of our thoughts, and moſt retir'd actions, as if we were in an open theatre and in the preſence of the greateſt aſſembly. For in the next life men ſhall not be rewarded for what they ſeem'd to be, but for what they really were in this world. Therefore whatever we think, or ſpeak, or do, we ſhould always remember that the day of revelation is coming, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſclos'd, when all diſguiſes ſhall be laid aſide, and every ones mask ſhall be taken off, and all our actions and deſigns ſhall be brought upon the publick ſtage and expos'd to the view of men and Angels. *There is nothing* now *hidden which ſhall not* then *be reveal'd, nor ſecret which ſhall not be made known.*

5. To arm us againſt the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the terrour of it is infinitely encreas'd by the fearful apprehenſions of what may follow it. But the comfortable hopes of a bleſſed immortality do ſtrangely relieve the fainting ſpirits of dying men, and are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great meaſure to take away the terror of it. I know that the thoughts of death are diſmal even to good men, and we have never more need of comfort and encouragement than when we are conflicting with this laſt Enemy, and there is no ſuch comfortable conſideration to a dying man as the hopes of a happy eternity. He that looks upon death onely as a paſſage to glory, may welcome the meſſengers of it as bringing him the beſt and moſt joyful news that ever came to him in his whole life, and no man can ſtay behind in this world with half the comfort that this man leaves it.

And now I have done with the *two* things implyed in this phraſe, of *having our converſation in heaven, viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of heaven,

and

and the effect of theſe thoughts and conſiderations upon our hearts and lives.

I crave your patience but a little longer, till I make ſome reflection upon what hath been deliver'd concerning the happineſs of good men after this life. I have told you that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world, that it is great in it ſelf, and eternal in its duration, and far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. And now after all this, I am very ſenſible how much all that I have ſaid comes ſhort of the greatneſs and dignity of the thing So that I could almoſt begin again and make a new attempt upon this ſubject. And indeed who would not be loth to be taken off from ſo delightfull an argument? Methinks 'tis good for us to be here, and to let our minds dwell upon theſe conſiderations. We are unworthy of heaven and unfit to partake of ſo great a glory, if we cannot take pleaſure in the contemplation of thoſe things now the poſſeſſion whereof ſhall be our happineſs for ever.

With what joy then ſhould we think of thoſe *great and glorious things which God hath prepar'd for them that lov him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, which fadeth not away, reſerv'd for us in the heavens*? How ſhould we welcome the thoughts of that happy hour when we ſhall make our eſcape out of theſe priſons, when we ſhall paſs out *of this howling wilderneſs* into *the promis'd Land*, when we ſhall be remov'd from all the troubles and temptations of a wicked and ill-natured world; when we ſhall be paſt all ſtorms, and ſecur'd from all further danger of ſhipwreck, and ſhall be ſafely landed in the regions of bliſs and immortality?

O bleſſed time! *When all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes*, and *death and ſorrow ſhall be no more*; When *mortality* ſhall *be ſwallowed up of life*, and we ſhall enter

enter upon the poſſeſſion of all that happineſs and glory which God hath promis'd, and our faith hath believ'd, and our hopes have rais'd us to the expectation of; when we ſhall be eas'd of all our pains, and reſolv'd of all our doubts, and be purg'd from all our ſins, and be free'd from all our fears, and be happy beyond all our hopes, and have all the happineſs ſecur'd to us beyond the power of time and change: When we ſhall know God and other things without ſtudy, and love him and one another without meaſure, and ſerve and praiſe him without wearineſs, and obey his will without the leaſt reluctancy; and ſhall ſtill be more and more delighted in the knowing, and loving, and praiſing, and obeying of God to all eternity.

How ſhould theſe thoughts affect our hearts, and what a mighty influence ought they to have upon our lives? The great diſadvantage of the arguments fetch'd from another world is this, that thoſe things are at a great diſtance from us, and not ſenſible to us; and therefore are not apt to affect us ſo ſtrongly, and to work ſo powerfully upon us. Now to make amends for this diſadvantage we ſhould often revive theſe conſiderations upon our mind, and inculcate upon our ſelves the reality and certainty of theſe things together with the infinite weight and importance of them. We ſhould reaſon thus with our ſelves; If good men ſhall be ſo unſpeakably happy, and conſequently wicked men ſo extreamly miſerable in another world: If theſe things be true and will one day be found to be ſo, why ſhould they not be to me as if they were already preſent? why ſhould not I be as much afraid to commit any ſin as if Hell were naked before me, and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned? and why ſhould I not be as careful to ſerve God and keep his commandments, as if Heaven were open to my view, and I ſaw *Jeſus* ſtanding at the right

right hand of God with crowns of glory in his hand ready to be ſet upon the heads of all thoſe who continue faithfull to him?

The lively apprehenſions of the nearneſs of death and eternity are apt to make mens thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think our ſelves prepar'd for our future ſtate to tranſport us with joy, or to amaze us with horrour. For the ſoul that is fully ſatisfi'd of his future bliſs is already entred into heaven, has begun to take poſſeſſion of glory, and has (as it were) his bleſſed Saviour in his arms, and may ſay with old *Simeon*, *Lord now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation.* But the thoughts of death muſt needs be very terrible to that man who is doubtfull or deſpairing of his future condition. It would daunt the ſtouteſt man that ever breathed, to look upon death when he can ſee nothing but hell beyond it. When the Apparition at *Endor* told *Saul*, *to morrow thou and thy Sons ſhall be with me*, theſe words ſtruck him to the heart, ſo that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more ſtrength left in him.* It is as certain that we ſhall die as if an expreſs meſſenger ſhould come to every one of us from the other world and tell us ſo. Why ſhould we not then always live as thoſe that muſt die, and as thoſe that hope to be happy after death? To have theſe apprehenſions vigorous and lively upon our minds this is *to have our converſation in heaven, from whence alſo we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf.*

FINIS.

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